

Conservation Programs

photo: USDA



Conservation Technical Assistance Program

Provides natural resource inventories and assessments, planning assistance, and technical assistance in applying conservation systems and practices to protect and enhance natural resources. NRCS has the responsibility to provide conservation technical assistance to individuals, groups, communities, state and local governments and other federal agencies.

Small Watershed Program (PL-566)

Helps urban and rural communities improve and develop water and land resources in watersheds of up to 250,000 acres. Projects can address flood prevention, erosion and sediment control, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, wetland creation and restoration, irrigation, public recreation, water quality, and land treatment.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

Develops opportunities for rural economic development, community improvement, natural resources improvement, recreation, and tourism through a multi-county program led by local units of government and nonprofit organizations.

Soil Survey

Publishes scientific inventories that name and classify soils according to a national system and provides information on the potential and limitations of the soil for various uses. A target date of 2002 has been set to have all soils in the United States digitized.

National Resources Inventory (NRI)

Provides a national comprehensive survey which assesses the use, treatment, conditions, and trends of natural resources on nonfederal rural lands at five-year intervals.

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Plant Materials

At Plant Materials Centers across the country, scientists evaluate the growth and use of plant materials and cultural and management technologies for solving soil and water conservation problems. Plant materials and technologies are needed for range and pasture land, cropland, streambank and shoreline stabilization, wildlife habitat improvement, wetland enhancement, and revegetation and stabilization of human-caused environmental disturbances, such as construction on urban lands, transportation, transmission, utility corridors, timber harvest, and strip mining of mineral resources.

Snow, Water, and Climate Services

Montana's SNOTEL (SNOWpack TELelemetry) network collects data on snow water content, precipitation, and temperature. NRCS uses the SNOTEL network to monitor snow melt, temperature, and rainfall to provide water users, water managers, flood forecasters, and public interests with daily and weekly streamflow forecasts during the snowmelt peak runoff period.

Cost-Share Programs

Conservation of Private Grazing Lands (GLCI)

A program to ensure that technical, educational, and related assistance is provided to those who own and manage private grazing lands.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

A voluntary program that results in the planting of sensitive cropland to permanent vegetative cover for 10 to 15 years. NRCS provides technical assistance for the Conservation Reserve Program. CRP contract holders receive annual rental payments from the Farm Service Agency.

Debt for Nature Program (DNP)

A debt restructuring or relief program for USDA borrowers who agree to place lands under a conservation contract or easement.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

Provides technical and financial assistance to safeguard lives and property when a watershed is suddenly damaged by floods, fires, and other natural disasters.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

A voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers to address serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources through 5- to 10-year contracts. EQIP provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to maximize environmental benefits per federal dollar expended.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)

A voluntary program that helps farmers keep their land in agriculture. The program provides funding to state, local, or tribal entities with existing farmland protection programs to purchase development rights or other interests through conservation easements.

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

A voluntary cost-share program to assist private landowners increase present and future supplies of timber products and improve multipurpose management through tree planting, timber stand improvement, and related practices on nonindustrial private forests.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

A voluntary program to restore and protect wetlands on private property. The program offers options of permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10 year duration.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

A voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. WHIP provides both technical and cost sharing assistance through 10-year contracts.

